Small Group Guide: Zechariah 12-14 -- The Return of the King



Overview

This guide is based on a sermon walking through Zechariah 12-14, exploring the prophet's remarkable predictions about the end times, the return of Christ, and the establishment of his kingdom. Written approximately 500 years before Christ, these chapters offer a detailed and awe-inspiring look at what Scripture says is yet to come.

Key Takeaways

1. Zechariah's prophecy is grounded in the character of God. The passage opens by reminding readers who is speaking -- the one who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundations of the earth, and forms the spirit of man. The weight of the prophecy rests on the authority of the one giving it.

2. Scripture reveals two advents of Christ. Zechariah 12 is one of the clearest Old Testament passages showing that the Messiah would come twice -- first to be pierced, and second to be recognized and received by those who mourned rejecting him.

3. The Mount of Olives is central to both the Ascension and the Return. Acts 1 records that Jesus ascended from the Mount of Olives and that he will return in the same manner.

Zechariah 14 predicts his feet will touch that very mountain, splitting it in two -- a prophecy made 500 years before the Ascension even occurred.

4. God consistently works through patterns and foreshadowing. Antiochus Epiphanes and the abomination of desolation, the Exodus plunder, the wandering in the wilderness -- God has woven threads throughout history that point forward to the final fulfillment of his plan.

5. The millennial kingdom will be real and tangible. The nations coming to Jerusalem annually for the Feast of Tabernacles, and some still rebelling, points to a literal thousand-year reign of Christ before eternity -- a time when everything common will be marked as sacred in his presence.

Discussion Questions

Opening (Choose one to get the conversation started)

- What is one thing from this sermon that surprised you, challenged you, or stood out to you?
- Before this study, how much had you thought about the second coming of Christ? Was it something you engaged with or tended to avoid?

Section 1: God Speaks Through the Prophet (Zechariah 12:1)

The sermon noted that Zechariah "lays it on thick" in the opening verse, reminding the people exactly who is behind this message.

- Why do you think it matters that Scripture consistently reminds us of who God is before delivering difficult or weighty messages?
- Is there an area of your life right now where you need to be reminded of the authority and character of the God who is speaking to you?

Section 2: Jerusalem Under Siege and God's Deliverance (Zechariah 12:2-9)

The sermon pointed out that God says he will save the rural areas of Judah before the city of Jerusalem so that no one considers themselves above another. The connection was made to Jesus saying the last will be first and the first will be last.

- What does it reveal about God's character that he deliberately protects the overlooked and the lesser-regarded first?
- Where in your own life or community do you see the tendency to elevate status or importance in ways that run counter to how God operates?
- The sermon noted that the weakest among them in that day will be like David. What does that stir in you personally, knowing that God can make the feeble into the formidable?

Section 3: Looking on the One They Pierced (Zechariah 12:10-14)

The sermon called this "one of the most mind-blowing things in Scripture" -- that a passage written 500 years before Christ describes people mourning when they recognize the Messiah they failed to receive at his first coming.

- What does it mean to you that God built the recognition of Christ's two advents into the Old Testament centuries in advance?
- The mourning described here is deep and genuine -- like mourning for an only son. Have you ever experienced a moment of genuine grief over your own failure to recognize or respond to who Jesus is? What did that feel like?
- How does this passage shape the way you think about those around you who have not yet recognized Jesus as Messiah?

Section 4: The Fountain Opened for Sin and Uncleanness (Zechariah 13:1)

The sermon asked, "Who is that fountain that is opened up?" and answered simply: it is Jesus.

- In your own words, what does it mean that Jesus is a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness?
- Is there something in your life right now that you have been hesitant to bring to that fountain? What is holding you back?
- How does the timing of this fountain -- opened in the same moment the people finally recognize the one they pierced -- speak to the nature of God's grace?

Section 5: The Return to the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:3-5)

The sermon connected Zechariah 14:4 directly to Acts 1:9-12, showing that the place Jesus left from is the place he will return to.

- What does the precision of this prophecy -- the specific mountain, the specific split, confirmed by a geological fault line -- do for your confidence in Scripture?
- The angels in Acts 1 essentially told the disciples to stop staring at the sky and trust that he would return. How do you hold the tension between anticipating Christ's return and living faithfully in the present?
- If you genuinely believed Jesus could return in your lifetime, what would change about the way you are living right now?

Section 6: The Millennial Kingdom and the Feast of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16-21)

The sermon argued that the nations still rebelling during the millennium is one of the stronger biblical arguments for a literal thousand-year reign of Christ.

- Does the idea of a literal millennial kingdom affect how you think about the future and about eternity? Why or why not?
- The sermon noted that during this time, even the most common objects -- pots, bells on horses -- will be engraved with "holiness to the Lord." What does it say about the nature of Christ's reign that the ordinary becomes sacred in his presence?
- The Feast of Tabernacles was about God dwelling with his people. In what ways are you currently experiencing or neglecting the reality that God desires to dwell with you now, not just in the future?

Practical Applications

This week, choose one of the following to put into practice:

1. **Spend time in Zechariah 12-14 on your own.** Read through the chapters slowly and mark every phrase that begins with "in that day." Reflect on what it means that God has mapped out the end with this level of detail.
2. **Pray with the second coming in mind.** Each day this week, begin your prayer time by acknowledging that Jesus is coming back. Let that truth shape what you bring to God in prayer.

3. **Identify one area where you have not brought something to the fountain.** Zechariah 13:1 describes a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. Name it, confess it, and receive the grace that is available to you.
4. **Have a conversation about eternity with someone.** The sermon covered significant ground about what Scripture says is coming. Share one thing that stood out to you with a friend, family member, or coworker this week.
5. **Reflect on what it means that the ordinary becomes sacred.** Consider your daily routine -- your work, your home, your habits. Ask God to help you see those spaces as places where his presence can dwell and where holiness can be marked on the common things of your life.

Closing Prayer Focus

Close your time together by praying through these three things:

- **Gratitude** -- for the precision and faithfulness of God's Word across thousands of years
- **Confession** -- for the ways we have failed to recognize and receive Jesus fully, like those who looked on the one they pierced
- **Anticipation** -- for the return of Christ, asking God to make that hope a living, daily reality rather than a distant abstraction

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"And the Lord shall be king over all the earth. In that day it shall be -- the Lord is one and his name is one." -- Zechariah 14:9

5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

Based on the Prophecies of Zechariah and the Return of Christ



Day 1: The God Who Speaks Into the Future

Reading: Zechariah 12:1-3

Devotional: The opening words of Zechariah 12 remind us who is speaking. This is not the word of a man speculating about tomorrow. This is the word of the One who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundations of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him. Before Zechariah delivers a single prophecy about Jerusalem's future, God establishes his credentials as Creator and Sovereign. When life feels uncertain and the future feels threatening, return to this truth. The God who holds the cosmos in his hands is the same God who holds your life. His word about the future is not a guess. It is a promise from the one who made everything.

Reflection: In what areas of your life are you tempted to doubt whether God is in control? How does the identity of the God who is speaking change the way you receive his promises?

Application: Write down one promise from Scripture that feels difficult to believe right now. Spend time meditating on who made that promise rather than on the circumstances that seem to contradict it.

Day 2: The One They Pierced

Reading: Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34-37

Devotional: Five hundred years before the crucifixion, Zechariah recorded the words of God describing a moment when people would look on the one they pierced and mourn for him as one mourns for an only son. This is one of the most staggering prophecies in all of Scripture. It reveals that the Messiah would come, be rejected, be wounded, and then come again, at which point those who had not recognized him would finally see him clearly. The mourning described here is not the mourning of despair but of recognition and repentance. Grace and supplication are poured out in that very moment. The wound that should have been our condemnation becomes the mark of our salvation.

Reflection: Have there been moments in your own life when you failed to recognize what God was doing, only to see it clearly later? What did that recognition produce in you?

Application: Spend time in prayer today thanking God specifically for the wounds of Christ, not in a routine way, but with the kind of grief and gratitude that comes from truly understanding what those wounds cost and what they purchased.

Day 3: The Fountain Opened for Sin

Reading: Zechariah 13:1; Revelation 22:1-5

Devotional: In that day, Zechariah declares, a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness. There is only one source of cleansing from sin. There is only one who makes us clean, and that is Jesus. The fountain is not a ritual. It is not a religious system. It is a person. What Zechariah sees in prophetic vision, the New Testament declares in full clarity. The river of life that flows from the throne of God in Revelation echoes this same image. Cleansing, life, and the removal of uncleanness all flow from the same source. Come to the fountain. It has not run dry.

Reflection: Do you ever find yourself trying to manage your guilt or uncleanness through effort or religious routine rather than returning to Christ himself? What does it mean practically to come to the fountain?

Application: Identify one area of persistent guilt or shame you have been carrying. Bring it specifically to Christ in prayer today, trusting that the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness is sufficient for what you are carrying.

Day 4: His Feet on the Mount of Olives

Reading: Zechariah 14:3-9; Acts 1:9-12

Devotional: The connection between Zechariah 14 and Acts 1 is one of the most remarkable threads in all of Scripture. Zechariah writes that in the day of battle, when things are at their darkest, the Lord himself will come and his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives. Centuries later, the disciples watch Jesus ascend from that very mountain, and angels tell them he will return in the same manner in which he left. The specificity of this promise is staggering. God does not speak in vague generalities. He names the mountain. He identifies the manner of return. When God makes a promise, he keeps it down to the last detail. The same precision that marked every prophecy of his first coming will mark his second.

Reflection: How does the precision of fulfilled prophecy strengthen your confidence in the promises of God that are still outstanding in your own life?

Application: Research one Old Testament prophecy that was fulfilled in the life, death, or resurrection of Jesus. Allow the specificity of that fulfillment to become an anchor for your faith in what God has promised but not yet delivered.

Day 5: Holiness to the Lord on Everything

Reading: Zechariah 14:20-21; Colossians 3:17

Devotional: The closing image of Zechariah is one of breathtaking transformation. In the millennial kingdom, the most ordinary objects, the bells on horses, the cooking pots in homes, will bear the inscription holiness to the Lord. Nothing will be common. Nothing will be secular. Everything will be sacred because the King is present and his reign is acknowledged by all. This is not merely a future vision. It is a present call. Colossians 3:17 declares that whatever we do, in word or deed, we are to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. The coming kingdom reorders everything. The ordinary becomes sacred when it is offered to a holy God. That reordering can begin today.

Reflection: What areas of your daily life have you mentally categorized as ordinary or separate from your faith? What would it look like to engrave holiness to the Lord over those areas?

Application: Choose one routine, ordinary part of your day, a commute, a meal, a work task, and intentionally offer it to God this week. Practice the awareness that in Christ, nothing in your life need remain merely common.